

**Communicable Disease Epidemiology
and Immunization Section**

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**Health Update: Changes in Vaccine Ordering Procedures for
Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)
August 12, 2008**

Action requested:

- **Be aware that RabAvert from Novartis is the only rabies vaccine currently available. Vaccine can be ordered through wholesalers and distributors, or directly from Novartis by calling 1-800-244-7668, option 2.**
- **Contact Public Health at 206-296-4774 to report possible rabies exposures and discuss need for PEP.**

Today the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that due to an increase in demand and a production delay, **IMOVAX Rabies vaccine made by Sanofi Pasteur is not currently available**. Sanofi Pasteur expects to have doses available again in late-September to early-October.

This development means Novartis RabAvert is the only rabies vaccine currently available. To obtain doses of vaccine for patients needing rabies post-exposure prophylaxis, health care providers may either (1) order vaccine from a wholesaler or distributor and have it drop-shipped directly to the clinic or hospital, or (2) order vaccine directly from Novartis by calling 1-800-244-7668, option 2. A health department confirmation code is necessary to order vaccine.

To minimize unnecessary use of rabies vaccine, please review the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) human rabies prevention recommendations (see below). To discuss whether PEP is indicated for a patient with potential rabies exposure, consult with Public Health by calling 206-296-4774, 7 days a week 24 hours a day. Vaccine for rabies PEP is released by Novartis on a case-by-case basis and shipped to health care providers. It may take up to 2 days for vaccine to be received. This delay should not represent an increased risk to most patients. Clinicians should inform Novartis of especially high-risk exposures (including bites to the head, face and neck) to request expedited shipment.

Resources

- Text of CDC update on the rabies vaccine supply situation:
http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/news/2008-08-15_RabVaxupdate.html
- Public Health rabies webpage for health care providers, including guidelines for clinical assessment and management of possible rabies exposures, reporting instructions, decision trees, and factsheets for patients.
<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/providers/epidemiology/rabies/animal-bites.htm>
- Frequently asked questions about rabies vaccine ordering and administration.
<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/providers/epidemiology/health-alert-080812.htm>
- 2008 recommendations on rabies prevention from ACIP:
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwrR/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5703a1.htm>